

DUNCAN HUNTER  
52D DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

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EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

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SECONDARY EDUCATION

COMMITTEE ON  
TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-0552

223 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-0552

(202) 225-5672  
FAX: (202) 225-0235

1870 CORDELL COURT, #206  
EL CAJON, CA 92020  
(619) 448-5201  
FAX: (619) 449-2251

February 23, 2011

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

Since the start of military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, millions of Americans have honorably served in the U.S. Armed Forces, contributing to our nation's mission success over nearly a decade of combat and sustaining the American military as the most effective and reliable fighting force in the world. Many of these men and women bring with them individual and unique experiences obtained through the benefits of higher education, whether it is as graduates of America's esteemed military service academies or any of the hundreds of Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs within colleges and universities nationwide.

While ROTC programs are welcomed on a majority of campuses, several of America's elite colleges and universities -- including Columbia, Harvard and Yale -- have repeatedly denied students the opportunity to participate in ROTC on campus. Some of these institutions have restricted any ROTC presence since the Vietnam War. Many of these same institutions, fueled by new elements of anti-military activism, continue to deny students the opportunity to pursue a career in the military or even consider the educational benefits and life experiences that are unique to military service.

The overriding claim for prohibiting ROTC was the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT)" policy, which, before being overturned last year, effectively managed issues related to that policy. Now that DADT has been repealed and the implementation process continues, despite objections from the Commandant of the Marine Corps, the Army Chief of Staff and others, it is now the Administration's obligation to immediately begin working with colleges and universities to guarantee the presence of ROTC on all campuses.

The prohibition on ROTC reached a new low-point recently, when a Columbia University student, Anthony Maschek, was publicly heckled during a town hall meeting on the topic of restoring military officer training. Maschek, according to reports, is a Columbia University freshman and former Army staff sergeant awarded the Purple Heart after being shot 11 times during combat in Kirkuk, Iraq. The meeting provided a chance for Maschek and others to express their views on the military and ROTC. Instead, Maschek, speaking on his own behalf, was called a "racist," while others hissed and booed the soldier-turned-student, who spent almost two years recovering from near fatal wounds at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Such overt disrespect is an insult to anyone who has ever worn a uniform in defense of our nation and demands that the Administration stand in support of the Armed Services by working to incorporate ROTC wherever restrictions exist. Equally disserving is the fact that colleges and universities that prohibit ROTC also receive millions of dollars in federal taxpayer support, giving added importance to the Solomon amendment, which permits federal funding to be withheld from schools that deny ROTC on campus. In 2006, the Supreme Court unanimously upheld the Solomon amendment as a method of recourse in this situation.

Mr. President, in your State of the Union address, you directly called on colleges and universities to "open their doors" to ROTC. Consistent with that message, I respectfully request any information on what steps you or your administration are taking to ensure the full recognition of military officer training on college and university campuses. Also, beyond the authority already provided by the Solomon amendment, I am interested to know if the Administration believes any additional authority, which can be provided by Congress, is needed to ensure compliance.

Restoring ROTC on college and university campuses is not only good for the country, but it would also create a healthier and more productive learning environment for students, specifically those who attend America's elite institutions. I look forward to learning more about your Administration's efforts on this front and remain available to provide whatever assistance I can to help achieve this goal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Duncan Hunter", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Duncan Hunter  
Member of Congress